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FOR ACTION

FOLLOW-UP TO THE DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL AT ITS SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF 1995

SUMMARY

The present report responds to the decision of the Executive Board at its third regular session of 1995 (18-21 September) that the secretariat prepare a more comprehensive report on follow-up to the decisions taken by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1995 for submission to the Board at the present session.

* E/ICEF/1996/2.

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Introduction

1. At its third regular session of 1995 (18-21 September), the Executive Board took note of the report on follow-up to decision taken by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1995 (E/ICEF/1995/CRP.47) (E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1, decision 1995/36) and further noted its intention to address this item at its first regular session of 1996.

2. The report initiated the process of informing the Board of the principal issues related to follow-up to the Economic and Social Council and, in particular, the conclusions of the Council's 1995 substantive session. The report pointed out that many of the issues emanating from the Council will require serious reflection by the UNICEF secretariat and/or consultations with inter-agency partners of UNICEF before the Executive Director can make definitive recommendations to the Executive Board. The report focused on the two areas that were most relevant to the Executive Board: operational activities for development and humanitarian affairs.

Operational activities for development

3. The present document is intended to further the process of informing the Board of the principal issues related to the follow-up to the Economic and Social Council decisions and the relevant decisions of the Executive Board. In taking note of the report at the third regular session, and in consideration of the conclusions with regard to the Council's recommendation to hold joint or consecutive meetings of the Executive Boards of the relevant funds and programmes, a number of delegations recommended that UNICEF proceed carefully on the issue and endorsed the Executive Director's decision to consult with the other relevant executive heads before taking the matter under consideration. A number of delegations also stressed the importance of adhering to the new UNICEF country programme preparation and approval process, an important step of which is the establishment of a link between the country strategy notes and country programmes. Some delegations also stressed that this link should not interfere with the mandates of any of the funds and programmes.

4. With regard to holding the annual sessions of the Board earlier in the year and to follow-up to resolution 1995/50 of 28 July 1995, in which the Economic and Social Council reiterated the importance of receiving reports from the Executive Boards in a timely manner and in all official languages, the Executive Board, at its third regular session, decided that the Executive Director's annual report to the Council will be considered at the second regular session of the Board in April 1996. In this way, it will be possible for the relevant parts of the report on the UNICEF Executive Board session to be made available at the substantive session of the Council in all languages.

5. In the intervening period since the 1995 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council and the third regular session of 1995 of the UNICEF Executive Board, the UNICEF secretariat has held consultations with its partners on the follow-up to the conclusions of the Council's 1995 substantive session. Taking into account the decisions and recommendations of the Executive Board at

its third regular session, the Executive Director requests the Executive Board to consider the following:

(a) On the subject of holding joint or consecutive meetings of the Executive Boards, the Executive Director would like to bring to the attention of the Board that the 1996 schedules place both the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund (UNDP/UNFPA) and UNICEF Executive Board sessions almost back to back. Also, 1996 will provide useful guidance regarding the new country programme approval process both for UNICEF and UNDP/UNFPA and how our Boards would like to organize their work in this respect. Guidance of the Board in this regard would be helpful;

(b) Regarding the request to the Executive Boards to identify specific problems, opportunities and areas where the Council could provide useful coordination and guidance on a system-wide basis, this matter should be placed before the Bureau of the UNICEF Executive Board in January 1996 after the adoption of the General Assembly resolution on the triennial comprehensive review of the United Nations operational activities for development.

Humanitarian affairs

6. In follow-up to the Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 of 28 July 1995 on "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations", and in light of the Board's decision to discuss emergency operations, including strategic issues and inter-agency coordination, during the first half of 1996, UNICEF has undertaken a review of the issues concerning the organization's role and responsibilities, as well as its operational and financial capacities to respond to emergency situations and support preventive actions.

7. UNICEF has concluded that strengthening country-specific and particularly local coping mechanisms of communities affected by natural, man-made disasters, conflicts or wars will continue to be the main thrust of UNICEF emergency and humanitarian efforts. Results from a UNICEF study undertaken in 1994 affirm that resources expended strategically at the relief stages of emergencies contribute to the early stabilization of emergencies, even in the case of complex emergencies, and ultimately create the necessary conditions for effective and longer-term rehabilitation and development.

8. The varying mixes of strategies and inputs required by emergency-specific and local needs, particularly at the height of complex emergencies, have demonstrated the imperative of close, proactive collaboration as well as the importance of agreement arrangements on modalities of response and action developed in field. UNICEF is in the final stages of signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. An MOU with the World Food Programme is close to completion. Consultations with the World Health Organization for signing an MOU are progressing well. Also UNICEF is presently consulting with the United Nations, bilateral agencies involved in emergencies and non-governmental organizations on the subject of collaboration.

9. Two reports on emergencies, one on UNICEF emergency operations in 1995, including coordination issues (E/ICEF/1996/7), and another on the UNICEF mission and strategies in emergencies (E/ICEF/1996/4) will be submitted to the Executive Board at the present session. Therefore, the Board may wish to address follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 under the agenda item relating to emergencies.